

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2005

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II, with members Bloomfield, Kreider, Raser, Senhauser, and Spraul-Schmidt present. Absent: Chatterjee, Kirk, Sullebarger, and Wallace.

MINUTES

The Board unanimously approved the minutes of the December 5, 2005 (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Raser).

2006 MEETING SCHEDULE

Urban Conservator William Forwood informed the Board that the 2006 meeting schedule was as proposed at the December 5, 2005 meeting and distributed copies of the final schedule.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 126 E. LIBERTY STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented a report for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish 126 E. Liberty Street to create surface parking to support the rehabilitation of several buildings at Main and Liberty Streets. The Board approved this project in January 2003.

Ms. Kellam said that the property contributes to the historic district; but it has been altered substantially on the first floor and has suffered significant deterioration. Furthermore it and its neighbor at 118 E. Liberty Street are the only remaining contributing buildings on the north side of Liberty between Main and Walnut Streets. Surface parking/storage surrounds 126 E. Liberty Street, and the historic streetscape has been lost.

Ms. Kellam indicated that an applicant must demonstrate that he/she cannot realize a reasonable rate of return through the renovation or sale of an historic property in order to justify its demolition. The applicant provided staff some basic economic data, but justification for demolition is more directly related to site conditions and the adjoining properties.

Staff believes that the demolition of 126 E. Liberty Street is an acceptable loss, given the deteriorated state of the building, the loss of the historic streetscape and the benefit of parking for the buildings to be rehabilitated at Main and Liberty. Approval would be conditioned on the applicant submitting an acceptable plan for the new parking lot prior to demolition.

The applicant, Mark Brunner, responded to Mr. Kreider that the new lot would provide 12 to 15 spaces to serve the 18 residential and 6 commercial storefronts at Main and Liberty Streets.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (Kreider, second Spraul-Schmidt) to take the following actions:

1. Find that the building at 126 E. Liberty Street is of the period to contribute to the character of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, but that the streetscape has been lost.
2. Find that there is no reasonable economic return to be gained from the use of all or part of the building which would conform to the guidelines and the strict application of the guidelines would
 - a. Deny the owner a reasonable rate of return on the real property; and
 - b. Amount to a taking of the property of the owner without just compensation.

3. Find that the demolition is an acceptable loss to support the Main and Liberty project and will help preserve the community's historic buildings.
4. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of 126 E. Liberty with the conditions that no demolition permit will be issued until the HCB has approved final drawings for the surface parking lot.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS & ZONING VARIANCES, 1125 BANK STREET, DAYTON STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented a report for a Certificate of Appropriateness and Zoning Variances to install new fencing and signage at 1125 Bank Street. The building is in Area C of the Dayton Street Historic District. Although additional work is proposed for the facility, the historic district guidelines limit review to the proposed signage.

Ms. Cowden indicated that three signs were proposed – a horizontal wall sign on the north elevation facing Bank Street, a large sign to replace an existing one on the west wall oriented to I-75 and a third wall sign on the east elevation facing an open plaza. Each sign would require zoning variances for its size, dimensions and location.

A new 6' metal picket fence will replace an existing 4'-0" chain link fence along Bank Street east of the building and requires a Zoning Variance to exceed the permitted 4'-0" height.

Staff believes that expanding the wall sign on the Banks Street façade and the west wall sign facing I-75 are justified and that zoning variances should be granted for their installation. Likewise, staff recommends approving a zoning variance to allow the new 6' picket fence. However, staff believes that zoning variances are not justified for the east wall fence since the building is adequately marked in all directions by the other two signs.

Raymond Mack and David Akester, GBBN Architects, were present to answer questions from the Board. The applicants requested that the Board grant the COA and variance for the metal fencing as proposed. However, they requested that the Board treat the signage proposal as a preliminary design review.

Mr. Akester said that if he could have only one wall sign, his client would prefer one on the east elevation rather than the north facade. He explained that the east wall sign would direct the public to the new entrance off the plaza rather than to the present north entry. Mr. Raser agreed that it might be better to locate a sign over the new entry gateway and suggested abandoning the sign at the old entry.

Mr. Senhauser commented that the new graphics should be used to organize and animate the simple structure. He indicated that he was open to signs on all three elevations if it made the building more interesting. He suggested the applicant consider wrapping the sign at the corner or around the gateway to identify the entrance.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (Kreider, second Spraul-Schmidt) to take the following actions:

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed fencing.
2. Approve a Zoning Variance to permit the installation of the proposed 6'-0" tall metal fence on Bank Street finding that such a relief from the literal interpretation of the Cincinnati Zoning Code will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety and

3. welfare or injurious to property in the district or vicinity where the property is located and
 - a. Is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation as not to adversely affect the historic architectural or aesthetic integrity of the district
4. Table the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness and zoning variances for the three proposed wall signs in order to give the applicant an opportunity consider design options in light of the Board's comments and suggestions

ADJOURN

As there were no other items for consideration by the Board, the meeting adjourned.

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser, Chairman

Date: _____